

Cyberpunk in William Gibson's *Neuromancer***Dr. Mrs. Manik Shantinath Patil**Associate Professor,
Dept. of English
Sadashivarao Mandlik Mahavidyalay, Murgud
Tal-Kagal Dist-Kolhapur
Maharashtra**Abstract**

Science and technology have been the major factors responsible to bring the change in human life. The utilization of the science and technology in the literature has caused to emerge the science fiction. Cyberpunk which is the post-modern genre of science fiction involves oppressive picture of futuristic computerized society. William Gosson's *Neuromancer* is the reflection of Cyberpunk which highlights on the breaking of computer systems in order to steal or change or destroy information as a form of cyber-terrorism. The study finds the truth that Science Fiction provides the clues for scientific research but at the same time it expresses a concern about future of human life. It states about incoming disaster. The knowledge is double-edged weapon. Its use is largely depended on its user. Cyberpunk creates fears about the relationship between Machine and Man, who is the Master? The development in the technology and science will not corrupt and damage the feelings of man like love, friendship which has great power. Thus the humanity will remain forever.

Key Words: science fiction, Cyberpunk, science and technology, double-edged weapon

Science and technology have been the major factors responsible to bring the change in human life. Literature emphasizes about the time that is dreamed by the literary persons to come in future. The literature which applies science and technology for the same is Science fiction. It is the recent popular development in English literature. It is developed in such a way that now it is called as the separate branch of literature. According to [Basil Davenport](#). 1955. "Science fiction is fiction based upon some imagined development of science, or upon the extrapolation of a tendency in society." According to [Barry N. Malzberg](#). Science fiction is "that branch of fiction that deals with the possible effects of an altered technology or social system on mankind in an imagined future, an altered present, or an alternative past." It is one of the works of science fiction to talk of future, to give the readers idea of time to come and suggest them the ways to face it. Unlike scientists and futurologists the Science Fiction writers use the creative imagination and vision. The basic theme of science fiction consists of time travel, space travel, marvelous discoveries, life in other world. The Science Fiction was quite popular in Victorian era. One of the recent developments of

Science Fiction is Cyberpunk. The present paper is the sincere attempt of the researcher to analyze, interpret and evaluate the concept of Cyberpunk reflected in the novel *Neuromancer* of William Gibson.

Cyberpunk is a [postmodern science fiction genre](#). Cyberpunk is a programmer who breaks into computer systems in order to steal or change or destroy information as a form of cyber-terrorism. In Cyberpunk the events take place partially or entirely within the "virtual reality" formed by computers or computer networks. It focuses on "[high tech](#) and [low life](#)."

According to David MacCarter Cyberpunk is "Technology in a science fiction setting. Generally involving computers and hacking." (David MacCarter Jan 18, 2004) It is "a sub genre of sci-fi usually with deep philosophical statements about the nature of freedom and reality. Cyberpunk is usually set in a de-humanized and futuristic society. The protagonist is usually paranoid or suspicious about society, and usually gets it right. loads of famous books, films, and comic can be considered cyberpunk, ..." (*seeing-blind*, Sep 10, 2005) The name **Cyberpunk** was originally coined by Bruce Bethke, as the title of his short story "Cyberpunk," published in 1983. Cyberpunk plots often center on a conflict among [hackers](#), [artificial](#)

[intelligences](#), and [mega corporations](#). These novels generally speak about future but about near future and not far-future such as [Isaac Asimov's *Foundation*](#) or [Frank Herbert's *Dune*](#). The settings are usually [post-industrial dystopias](#). The primary exponents of the cyberpunk field include William Gibson, Neal Stephenson, Bruce Sterling, Pat Cadigan, Rudy Rucker, and John Shirley. In some cyberpunk writing, much of the action takes place [online](#), in cyberspace, blurring the border between actual and [virtual reality](#). A typical [trope](#) in such work is a direct [connection](#) between the human brain and computer systems. Cyberpunk depicts the world as a dark, threatening place with [networked](#) computers dominating every aspect of life. [Protagonists](#) in cyberpunk writing usually include computer hackers, who are often patterned on the idea of the lone hero fighting injustice, such as [Robin Hood](#).

Probably the first novel which spoke about [cyberspace](#) was John M. Ford's *Web of Angels* (1980). The science-fiction editor Gardner Dozois is generally acknowledged as the person who popularized the use of the term "cyberpunk" as a kind of [literature](#), although Bruce Bethke coined the term in 1980 for his short story "Cyberpunk," which was published in the November 1983 issue of *Amazing Science Fiction Stories*. The term was quickly appropriated as a label to be applied to the works of William Gibson, Bruce Sterling, Pat Cadigan and others. Science-fiction writer [David Brin](#) describes cyberpunk as "the finest free promotion campaign ever waged on behalf of science fiction." Among these writers William Gibson (born March 17, 1948) is one of the greatest contributors in Cyberpunk.

William Gibson is an [American-Canadian speculative fiction](#) novelist who has been called the "noir prophet" of the [cyberpunk](#) subgenre. Gibson has written more than twenty short stories and ten critically acclaimed novels (one in collaboration), and has contributed articles to several major publications and collaborated extensively with performance artists, filmmakers and musicians. Gibson's early works are bleak, noir near-future stories about the effect of [cybernetics](#) and computer networks on humans—a "combination of lowlife and high tech". Gibson coined the term "[cyberspace](#)" in his short story *Burning Chrome* (1982) and later popularized the concept in his [debut novel](#), *Neuromancer* (1984). He is also credited

with predicting the rise of reality television and with establishing the conceptual foundations for the rapid growth of virtual environments such as video games and the [World Wide Web](#). Then Gibson became an important author of another science fiction sub-genre, steampunk with the 1990 alternate history novel *The Difference Engine*, written with Bruce Sterling. In the 1990s, he composed the [Bridge trilogy](#) of novels, which focused on sociological observations of near-future urban environments and late capitalism. His thought has been cited as an influence on science fiction authors, design, academia, cyber culture, and technology.

Neuromancer is a 1984 novel by [William Gibson](#), a seminal work in the [cyberpunk](#) genre and the first winner of the science-fiction the Nebula Award, Philip K. Dick Award, and Hugo Award. It was Gibson's [debut novel](#) and the beginning of the *Sprawl* trilogy. The novel tells the story of a [computer hacker](#) who is punished severely and then later rescued from the hardships and addictions by a fraud expecting the same to be done at big level.

Henry Dorsett Case is a low-level hustler (a person who gains money by dishonest way) in the [dystopian underworld](#) of Chiba City, Japan. Once this talented [computer hacker](#), Case, is caught stealing from his employer. As the punishment for his theft, Case's central nervous system is damaged with a mycotoxin. As a result Case becomes unable to use keyboard skills to access the [global computer network](#) in [cyberspace](#), a virtual reality data spaces called the "Matrix". Case became unemployable, frustrated, addicted to drugs, and wishes to commit suicide. Case desperately searches the Chiba black clinics for a miracle cure. Case is saved by [Molly Millions](#), an augmented (to make it larger) "street samurai" and mercenary (a man who is paid to fight who is from other country) who works for a shadowy ex-military officer named Armitage. He offers to cure Case in exchange for his services as a hacker. Case jumps at the chance to regain his life as a "console cowboy," But neither Case nor Molly know what Armitage is really planning. Case accepts the proposal and Case's nervous system is repaired using new technology. Armitage offers the clinic as payment, but he soon learns from Armitage that sacs of the poison that first crippled him have been placed in his blood vessels as well. Armitage promises Case

that if he completes his work in time, the sacs will be removed; otherwise they will dissolve, disabling him again. He also has Case's pancreas replaced and new tissue grafted into his liver, leaving Case incapable of metabolizing cocaine or amphetamines and apparently ending his drug addiction. Meanwhile Case develops a close personal relationship with Molly. Molly suggests Case to search Armitage's background. Meanwhile, Armitage assigns them their first job to steal a ROM module that contains the saved consciousness of one of Case's mentors, legendary cyber-cowboy McCoy Pauley, nicknamed "Dixie Flatline." is needed by Armitage wishes to acquire Pauley's hacking expertise. But the ROM construct is stored in the corporate headquarters of media conglomerate (a large firm consisting of several companies)Sense/Net. To divert the attention a street gang named the "Panther Moderns" who are hired do the attack on Sense/Net. The diversion allows Molly to enter the building and steal Dixie's ROM. Meanwhile Case and Molly discover the real identity of Armitage. Formerly, he was Colonel Willis Corto, a member of "Operation Screaming Fist," which planned on insightful and disrupting Soviet computer systems from an ultra light aircraft dropped over Russia. The Russian military got this information before hand. They installed defenses to render the attack impossible, but the military went ahead with Screaming Fist, with a new secret purpose of testing these Russian defenses. As the Operation team attacked a Soviet computer center, EMP weapons shut down their computers and flight systems, and Corto and his men were targeted by Soviet laser defenses. He and a few survivors commandeered a Soviet military helicopter and escaped over the heavily guarded Finnish border. Everyone was killed except Corto, who was seriously wounded while landing the helicopter. After some months in the hospital, Corto was visited by a Government military official and then medically rebuilt to be able to provide what he came to realise was fake testimony, designed to mislead the public and protect the military officers who had covered up knowledge of the EMP weapons. After the trials, Corto snapped, killing the Government official who contacted him and then disappeared into the criminal underworld.

In the epilogue, Molly leaves Case. Case finds a new girlfriend, resumes his hacking work, and spends his earnings from the mission replacing his internal organs so that he can continue his previous drug use. Wintermute/Neuromancer contacts him, saying that it has become "the sum total of the works, the whole show," and has begun looking for other AIs like itself. Scanning old recorded transmissions from the 1970s, the super-AI finds a lone AI transmitting from the Alpha Centauries star system. In the surrounding substance, Case hears inhuman laughter, a trait associated with Pauley during Case's work with his ROM construct, thus suggesting that Pauley was not erased after all, but instead worked out a side deal with Wintermute/Neuromancer to be freed from the construct so he could exist in the surrounding substance.

In the end, while logged into the matrix, Case catches a glimpse of himself, his dead girlfriend Linda Lee, and Neuromancer. The implication of the sighting is that Neuromancer created a copy of Case's consciousness when it previously tried to trap him. The copy of Case's consciousness now exists with that of Linda's, in the matrix, where they are together forever. Ultimately, Case realizes that it is Neuromancer, a far-fetching intelligence for whom he is working. The novel ends with case's realization that he has been controlled by the very technology he uses.

One of the cyberpunk genre's prototype characters is Case, from Gibson's *Neuromancer*. Case is a "console cowboy," a brilliant hacker who had betrayed his organized criminal partners. Robbed of his talent through an injury wreaked by the merciless partners, Case unexpectedly receives an opportunity to be healed by expert medical care but only if he participates in another criminal project with a new team.

Like Case, many cyberpunk protagonists are manipulated, placed in situations where they have little or no choice. Although they can see the dangers of it, harm of it the situation is created before them in such a way that they can do nothing and can't come out of it. They are helpless. Cyberpunk throws light on such [anti-heroes](#)—"criminals, outcasts, visionaries, dissenters and misfits" and provokes the readers to see the reality minutely. This emphasis on

the misfits and the misuse of science is the major part of cyberpunk.

Neuromancer is a perfect piece of Cyberpunk. It centers the theme on a conflict among [hackers](#), artificial intelligence, Case and Armitage and Wintermute and Neuromancer. The novel speaks about the fear of computer hacking and the destruction of computer system. It is the fear of the contemporary days about the future. Today the several countries are under the fear of the cyber attack. Everybody worries about the data store and their much of the energy is involved in preserving the data. The setting is [dystopian underworld](#) of [Chiba City](#), Japan. The world we see in this novel is underworld, dark where AIs like Wintermute and Neuromancer dominate. Case, and intelligent hacker also is dominated by them. We see the devilish ambition of AI, Wintermute to be the supreme AI. Protagonist, Case is a computer hacker one who defrauds others for the sake of own and then for Armitage later.

The deep study of the present article has drawn the attention of the scholars at certain facts that the science fiction expresses a concern about future of human life. It states about incoming disaster. The punishment of Case i.e. the damage of central nervous system is so severe that he loses his job and becomes unemployed. The frustrated Case involves in drug addiction and even thinks about the suicide. Not only this but the stealing of ROM module that contains the saved consciousness of one of Case's mentors, legendary cyber-cowboy McCoy Pauley is worrying aspect.

The present study brings ahead the truth that attraction of technology and science are ever increasing aspect of modern man. Day by day many more scholars and experts are involving in it. But many brains are caused harm to the society, nation and self due to the misuse of science. Case's central nervous system is damaged. He suffers from unemployment. Frustration brings the suicidal feelings in him. Case gets the chance of survival but once he is trapped forever trapped.

The study highlights one significant fact that the knowledge is double-edged weapon. Its use is largely depended on its user. Case has excellent skill to use keyboard to access the [global computer network](#) in [cyberspace](#) but he utilizes his knowledge for destruction first for own self by spreading virus

and later for Armitage by stealing the ROM module that contains the saved perception of one of his mentors, Pauley. But here is the suggestion that the same skill and knowledge may be utilized for human welfare.

The study puts forth the relationship between Machine and Man. There is the great fear that the machines which are created by man, for man, may gobble up the man in its giant wheel in future. Then Machine will be the master of Man. Wintermute and Neuromancer both are the AIs, human creations having different capacities but the Wintermute desires to mingle with Neuromancer so that it can get the power of Neuromancer and can become a supreme power. For it searches the lock of Neuromancer where it fails. However, a very beautiful truth that consoles us that whatever the technology may be, however the science may develop, it will not end and damage the feelings of man like love, friendship which has great power. Thus, the humanity will remain forever. Though Molly works for Armitage the feeling of friendship provokes her to help Case to search the real identity of Armitage and the friendship wins where Armitage is found as Colonel Willis Corto, a member of "Operation Screaming Fist" who later mixes with underworld. Similarly, Case repents over his negligence at the feeling of love of his girlfriend Linda Lee. In the end he realizes this love when he looks the copy of Case's consciousness created by Neuromancer which now exists with that of Linda's, in the matrix, where they are together forever.

Bibliography

1. Abramas, M., H., 7th edi. 2003, *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, New York, Eastern Press
2. Dr.Karajgi Mallikarjun and others. Recent Developments in Commonwealth Literature, Kampur, Divya Distributors, 2011

Web Bibliography

1. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cyberpunk>
2. <http://www.technovelgy.com/ct/AuthorSpecAlphaList.asp?BkNum=11>
3. <http://www.williamgibsonbooks.com/books/neuromancer.asp>
4. <http://www.urbandictionary.com/author.php?author=seeing-blind>
5. <http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=cyberpunk>